

JANUARY 2001

OPO BCC Meeting: Seatbelt Survey Results—Spring & Fall 2000

The Center for the Advancement of Transportation Safety (CATS) prepared a power point presentation for the January 5, 2001, Big County/Big City (BCC) Operation Pull Over (OPO) meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana. The presentation focused on the seatbelt survey results conducted by CATS in the spring and autumn of 2000. From that survey, results were compiled reflecting the seatbelt usage rate found in the BCC counties from which charts and graphs were constructed for the presentation. There were several important points that were the core of the presentation.

One point made was that CATS and OPO surveys employ slightly different methods of collecting observations. CATS' surveys are tied closely to road usage classifications while OPO is slightly more random in selecting observation sites. Additionally, OPO officers conduct surveys in blocks of 100 vehicles, while CATS uses blocks of time to frame observations (CATS' observers stay and observe on sites for either 30 minutes or 45 minutes that are carefully measured to be consistent).

An additional point is that the surveys conducted by CATS clearly show an upward trend in seatbelt usage in Indiana, as well as in the BCC counties. The first chart (figure 1) shows the statewide seatbelt trends from September 1997 to September 2000. Figure 7 and Figure 10 in the presentation are the only other graphs showing statewide results. The remaining charts all focus on the BCBC counties. The bars shown represent passenger cars and pickup trucks, and illustrate the great disparity between seatbelt use among the occupants of cars versus the occupants of pickup trucks.

Overall there is a wide variation in seat belt usage rates between the BCBC counties but all counties showed improvement between the spring and fall 2000 surveys. Usage rates for passenger cars range from the mid 50%'s to a high of 80% while pick up trucks had a range of

27 – 41%. Lake and St. Joseph counties have the greatest opportunity for improvement. Overall, the 13 counties in the BCBC programs have a seat belt usage rate of 63.3 percent (unweighted) compared with the statewide average for September 2000 of 62.1 percent (weighted).

Another chart depicts comparisons between the state's overall restraint usage rate and the BCC counties. This display is followed by a chart specifying the five largest counties in Indiana, and compares those with five counties containing mid-sized cities (Anderson, Bloomington, Kokomo, Lafayette, and Muncie).

Subsequent charts reflect the increased participation in the BCC OPO program that now has thirteen counties as participating members of the operation. Also displayed are charts comparing pickup truck drivers by age and gender. Additional charts compare driver age in relation to their passenger's gender and age. The labels on these charts refer to YD (young driver) YP (young passenger) or OD (older driver), and show increased seatbelt usage by younger drivers while in the company of older passengers and drivers.

The remaining charts refer to seatbelt usage on different classes of streets and highways. The road classes compared are freeway, arterial, and collector/local roads and streets. Also compared are passenger cars, pickup trucks, and the combination of all passenger vehicles. Clearly, the trend from the spring survey to the fall survey conducted in 2000 shows an increase in seatbelt usage across the board. It is the belief of CATS and OPO participants that this increased usage will also result in fewer deaths and serious injuries as a result of motor vehicle crashes on Indiana's streets and highways.